The GREEN LIGHT

Bulletin of the Point Association of Newport, Rhode Island

Winter 2002-2003

Waiting for Spring
The Green Light

XLVII No. 4  Winter 2002

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Meetings are generally scheduled for the first Monday of the month and are open to Association members. Please call Jack for time, date, and location.

The Point Association
The Point Association is a group of neighbors working together to improve the quality of life in our neighborhood by getting to know each other; preserving our historic heritage; maintaining the Point's residential character; beautifying our parks, streets, and piers; and promoting public policies that strengthen all of Newport’s neighborhoods.

Cover photo—identified as View of Torpedo Station, ca. 1885-1890, possibly the work of Clarence Stanhope—and other photos accompanying Kristina Baer's column beginning on page 8 are reprinted with permission of the Newport Historical Society.

Greetings from the Editor

Your Green Light would like to welcome Newport Restoration Foundation director Pieter Roos, as he takes on responsibility for "This Very Old House." Now a central part of our newsletter, thanks to Ron Potvin's insightful contributions to past issues, this column will continue to thrive with Pieter. His first subject, the Bridge Street fire this past summer, is one all Pointers will read with interest.

As we consider the year that is now coming to a close, I would like to stop for a moment to remember those who departed from our midst, especially Adé Bethune and John Howard, two dear souls who have left behind many fond memories.

And, as we prepare for 2003, your Green Light staff extends wishes to all our readers for a joyous holiday season and a new year of peace.

Sincerely,

Suzanne

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is my first Green Light communication to Point Association members since becoming president at the annual meeting on October 17. I feel privileged to help guide our neighborhood into its fourth century of vibrant American life in the City by the Sea. I want to thank Rich and Patricia Carrubba and all the executive committee members for setting a great example and preparing the way.

My wife Donna and I purchased our house on the corner of Third Street and Van Zandt Avenue in 1974, a time when the Point seemed to be emerging from a long hibernation. Doris Duke had established the Newport Restoration Foundation in the 1960s, the Navy had just moved out in 1974, and the city was still trying to determine its economic future. J.T. O'Connell warehouses crowded Long Wharf, and our neighborhood was still considered by many to be on the wrong side of the tracks. The Goat Island causeway had been built, and the Naval Torpedo Station on Goat Island was being demolished in preparation for the construction of a luxury hotel to be managed by Sheraton, then Double Tree, now Hyatt. The Department of Transportation (DOT) held a hearing on plans regarding ramp improvements to the Newport Bridge, and the rebuilding of the Van Zandt railroad bridge began one month after we moved into our house.

Needless to say, much has changed in the past 28 years. The dire predictions of economic collapse have not been realized. While the city focused on tourism development to fill the vacuum left by the fleet's departure, the Navy quietly built up an extensive educational, research, and medical facility on the northern boundary of the Point. Goat Island, Fort Adams, and dozens of spots in between became a mecca for tourists on the weekends. Residents of Massachusetts and Connecticut discovered inexpensive jewels of real estate available for investment within our neighborhood. It seemed that every other house on the Point was undergoing extensive renovation this summer.

These changes have created tension, as well as opportunity. Traffic and noise continue to increase, especially during the summer months. Increases in property values are great for those who sell their homes and leave the area, but for those who want to remain on the Point, increased taxes make it difficult. Commercial encroachment on the Point boundaries requires a constant vigil.

During the coming months, the Executive Committee of the Point Association will focus on many issues regarding the neighborhood. We will attend city council meetings and be sure that public officials are aware of positions that the Point Association takes on relevant issues. We will keep the membership informed through this publication, local newspapers, and other outlets. Stay tuned. There's more to come.

Sincerely,

Jack

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Report from City Hall

Seasons Greetings and best wishes for a healthy and prosperous New Year.

As I look throughout the community, I am proud to witness the incredible impact that the Point Association makes every day on the quality of life for others. My congratulations to President Jack Maytum and the other Executive Committee members of the Point Association. I am looking forward to having an open line of communication and continuing to work together as we shape our community.

There are many opportunities to share your time and talents with the community by serving on a city board or commission, and I would encourage you to explore this option. Additionally, the school department is always receptive to volunteer mentors/tutors for our student population. I know you will find these possibilities rewarding.

As the New Year approaches, we strive to make our city government more open and user friendly. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the City of Newport will have improved its website and made its move into the 21st century; The Pell Bridge Ramp Citizens Advisory Committee will have had its first meeting (Rich Carrubba and I are members); and meetings will be scheduled with neighbors regarding a swap of city land for waterfront property allowing public access for everyone.

There is always something of interest going on, and I am available to meet with anyone to discuss city business. Give me a call at 847-9122 or send me an e-mail at rickfirstward@aol.com. Thank you for your support.

Rick O'Neill,
City Council Representative, First Ward
In the “taking the bull by the horns” department, it should be noted that a Point resident has elected to have wires put underground in front of his house and pay for it himself. You may see the on-going work on Poplar Street across from St. John’s Guild Hall. If you’re interested in finding out about having this work done yourself, your best bet is to call the ever-helpful, cheerful and friendly Tim Friend at City Hall. It is most economical for a homeowner to do this work when the street is being repaved. In the future, therefore, we will try to give Point residents advance notice of when such work will be taking place, so they can think about undergrounding their wires in a timely, economical fashion.

In the “here we go again already” department, it must be noted that the Newport Harbor Inn is once again trying to expand, with all the attendant problems that may ensue. Thus, once again, a letter has been sent to our ever-vigilant Councilman Rick O’Neill, saying exactly what was said a few months ago. This is a message you may want to send to Rick, Mayor Sardella, and all other council people.

I’m opposed to the expansion of the Newport Harbor Hotel for a number of reasons.

1. It would set a bad precedent. Other hotels would legitimately be able to demand the same ability to expand.

2. Where’s the infrastructure going to come from? New hotel rooms will, sooner or later, mean more electricity is needed, more sewage will be created, etc. This creates problems and expenses. Where will the wires to supply this electricity, for instance, be located? The 23,000 volt wires running down Third St. within 10 feet of people’s homes are already illegal in most states. The residents would, justifiably, be up in arms about an attempt to increase the number of wires or voltage carried along that street.

3. In a nutshell—enough already.

NOTE: Councilman O’Neill responded to the above letter, saying: “My position has not changed, I am still against the hotel’s request for expansion.”

Al Lowe, Chair
Report on the Waterfront

Louis Jagschitz State Pier
Dedication of State Pier 9, named for lobsterman Louis Jagschitz, took place in October. Department of Environmental Management staff and city leaders, as well as Louie’s family and friends were there to dedicate the pier in honor of his memory. Paving, a nautically-inspired fence, and a holding tank to treat runoff water are all part of the $3.6 million improvements accomplished with grant money.

Proposed Marina at Storer Park
Mayor Sardella introduced a resolution at the November 20 City Council meeting requesting that the Waterfront Commission “study the possibility of establishing a low-impact resident marina at Storer Park.” “The nicest basin in the city” would accommodate 15 boats at floating docks and generate an estimated $100,000 in revenue. Issues to watch for: Storer Park deed restriction; CRMC classification of Type 2 waters waiver; parking; future expansion plans.

Long Wharf Resorts Land Swap Proposal
Long Wharf Resorts has been negotiating with Mayor Sardella for a land swap, requesting part of the Gateway Center parking area to build a 50-unit timeshare expansion to be swapped for the basin-bulkhead-small pier section of Harborwalk on the east waterside of the Inn. Since the foundation under the Inn on Long Wharf needs major repair work ($600,000) because of the Bay claiming its own under the filled land, this could be a reason for wanting the land swap on the upland side, which is also filled land. The number of lost parking spaces at the Gateway, increased parking for the 50 timeshares, and parking for a proposed marina will be the big issue. Once again, a large development that could spill tourist parking into the Point neighborhood needs to be watched. Other concerns will be overburdened infrastructure.

Liz Mathinos
Green Light Waterfront Reporter

The Michael Moulton House c.1711

For reservations contact: Sarah Gill at
The Michael Moulton House
30 Second Street, Newport,
Rhode Island 02840
Telephone 401-847-2189
E-mail s.j.gill@worldnet.att.net

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The Adventure Club was back in action during October, preparing for a jam-packed Halloween celebration. On a warm and sunny afternoon, Sunday, October 27, the whole gang convened in Storer Park at 3:00 pm—26 little ones, all in amazingly scary costumes. Marching to the tune of “Monster Mash,” the ghosts and goblins paraded through the Point and then gathered at St. John’s Guild Hall for some absolutely great activities: bobbing for apples, competing in a balloon race, taking turns swatting at a fantastic pinata, and diving for treasure in a grab bag. Many thanks and much credit to the new Adventure Club co-chairs, Chris Bandoni and Brynn Peck, for putting this event together. Welcome back, Adventure Club!
That Was Then... by Kristina Baer

Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow

It was December 25, 1778, a bitterly cold day. Lieutenant Frederick McKenzie, a British officer quartered in Newport, noted in his diary that “port wine froze in the bottles within doors” and that “…the harbor and all the Rivers smoked from the intensiveness of the cold." Snow began to fall that night and continued into the next day, “…blowing so hard, houses across the street were invisible.” When the storm subsided on December 27, leaving 20-foot snowdrifts in its wake, many citizens and soldiers had lost their lives. It took a month for the storm-ravaged town to dig itself out.

Over the last 300 years, more than a few blizzards have heaped spectacular amounts of snow on the Point. Many Pointers recall the blizzard of 1978 and, of course, 1993’s “Storm of the Century.” Like its infamous predecessor, the '78 storm brought the city to a standstill with gale-force winds that drove snowdrifts up to the eaves. Fortunately, there is more to winter than devastating storms, as John Benson, Jim Baillargeron, and Jane Walsh remind us here.

“Sure, it snowed more in those days,” John Benson tells me. Born and raised on the Point, he’s talking about the winters of his childhood in the 40's and 50's. For him, winter was mainly a somewhat inconvenient pause in his life on the water. Come November, the Bensons hauled their sailboats and stowed their paraphernalia until the spring. “We got up early and we went to bed early,” John says, “and we spent our days by the fire.”

Although the Benson house at 62 Washington Street had a coal furnace, the coldest breezes found their way into the house. To ward them off, the family relied on the large central fireplace. Sometimes, the wind blew hard enough to stir the curtains. And on the harbor’s rowdiest days, the water in the toilets would rise and fall with the surge.

Winter weekends, John’s mother, Esther Fisher Benson, would pack him and his two brothers into the car and take them out to Ocean Drive. They took long walks, collecting driftwood to fuel the fire. “Beautiful fires, they were,” he says, “because of the different minerals trapped in the wood.” They were fires made for whiling away the hours—until the boats went back in the water.

Most summer days, you can watch Pointers Jim Baillargeron and his son, Jimmy, launch their skiff, Nauta.com, off the Elm Street driveway. From there, they motor around the harbor and Bay, checking their 200-plus lobster pots. “She’s got a shallow draft, so we can go pretty much wherever we want,” Jim says. On a good summer day, the Baillargerons can pull in a hundred pounds of lobster, which they sell to local markets. And in the winter? Well, that’s a different story.

When you work a boat the size of Nauta.com, you watch weather conditions carefully. In the winter, when air and water temperatures can drop into the 30’s, the gear and the deck get icy—and lobsters hibernate when water temperatures dip below 39 degrees Fahrenheit. Consequently, between January and March, Nauta.com goes out once every other week, when the average take is about fifty pounds. Fewer trips, fewer lobsters, a slow season for lobstermen.

What is it like working on the water in winter? First of all, there’s no such thing as “typical.” Still, not surprisingly, some winters are more memorable.
than others. Jim talks about the winter of '77-78, one of the years he worked as a quahogger. “That year it got so cold the Bay froze over up around Gould Island, where we worked. The Coast Guard had to come out and break up the ice during their morning patrol.”

Among winter’s special effects on the water is sea smoke. Sea smoke (also called “Arctic fog”) is one of the most beautiful winter sights our bay has to offer. It occurs when the water temperature is warmer than the air temperature. Says Jim, “It’s eerie. It’s not like summer fog, which can close you in. On a fair day, the sky can be perfectly clear, but the sea smoke is all around you, like small, broken clouds.”

Jane Walsh recalls walks with her mother, Gladys Bozyan MacLeod. “She was such a nature lover,” Jane says. “Even in the winter, we took walks, and she would be on the lookout for birds and berries.” She also remembers the snow house her father built for her in the front yard of their house at 78 Washington Street. “It was so much fun!”

Among MacLeod family legends is a story about Jane’s brother, Billy. One winter, possibly the winter of 1934, he walked from 78 Washington Street across the frozen harbor to the Green Light. Since then, it seems, the only ice to be found on the harbor mainly hugs the shore or forms floes that the wind-driven waves toss like ping-pong balls against the seawall.

On winter mornings, Gladys MacLeod rose early to start a fire in the front room at 78 Washington Street. Jane, Marianne, and Billy would gather their clothes and race downstairs to dress. “In the summer, the kitchen was our headquarters. In the winter, we put up a storm door on the door out to the porch and waterfront. On it, my mother hung a sign ‘Do not remove ‘til the crocuses bloom.’ ”

“We loved the winter,” Jane says. Sledding or snowshoeing in the backyard and skating at Paradise Pond, followed by hot cocoa with marshmallows, were favorite winter activities. Once, she fell through thin ice, but the water was shallow and friends were nearby to pull her out. When she wasn’t outdoors, Jane curled up on the radiator in the waterside bay window at 78 Washington Street, reading and watching the gulls and the sky. To this day, she enjoys winter on the Point. A keen observer of winter flora and fauna, she helps Save the Bay by regularly canvassing the harbor seal population.

Winter tests one’s mettle and mettle is what New Englanders are famous for. Some of us embrace the season and all its outdoor rigors. Others observe it from beside a crackling fire, a cup of tea within easy reach.

Still, indoors or out, most Pointers agree that our harborside winters offer beauty as well as challenge. Think of the first snowflakes drifting over the water at twilight, the quiet of our snowy streets, the trees and gardens at rest, the gleam of candles in Point windows promising warmth and welcome. As we settle in for the cold spell ahead, it is well to remember these seasonal pleasures.

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Meet Our Exec

Jack Maytum, President
Former Newport Taxpayers' Association president, Jack is presently active in many Newport organizations, including the Thompson Middle School Technical Committee and the Newport Public Library Board. This Boston native, who manages his own business here, has lived in Newport for 30 years. He is beginning his first term as Point Association president.

Al Lowe, First Vice-President
Al, who was born in Philadelphia, has lived in Newport, together with his wife Patti and son Alden, for six years. An author of children's books, Al also chairs the Point Association Underground Wire Committee. Having originally served as Acting V.P., Al is now midway through his first term as an elected officer.

Louisa Boatwright, Second Vice-President
Having been seasonal Newport residents since 1989, Louisa and Bill Boatwright became year-round Pointers just three years ago. The Executive Committee's newest officer, Louisa—a.k.a. Victoria's mom—is a high-tech sales manager and has just published her first book, Newport for Kids and Families. She is beginning her first term in this post.

Carole Clark, Recording Secretary
Originally from Washington, D.C., Carole came to Newport from Plymouth, Mass, in 1997. In addition to her work as a travel agent, Carole owns and operates the Elm Street Inn together with her husband David. Having served initially as acting recording secretary, Carole was elected to her first term in October 2001.

Isabel Griffith, Corresponding Secretary
An educational consultant to independent schools, Isabel is an avid gardener, who took on the plant sale this year and succeeded mightily. Having resided in Texas, Virginia, Illinois, New Jersey, and our nation's capital, she joined the Executive Committee as acting corresponding secretary in 2001 and was just elected to her first term in this office.

Hillac Sarepera, Treasurer
Hillac and his wife Mary enjoy traveling in conjunction with his business, restoring their Point home at the corner of Washington and Elm streets, and—most especially—visiting with their grandchildren. A retired Navy officer, Hillar is entering his fourth and final year as the Point Association treasurer.
Marcia and Coles Mallory, *Beautification*
Marcia, a retired teacher, and Coles, Newport's former city manager, lived in Oregon, Utah, and Iowa before returning to our city in 1996. After serving as Point Association president, Coles formed Newport Neighborhoods, an organization of neighborhood association presidents who discuss common concerns. Marcia, the *Green Lights* circulation manager, is active in her church. Most of all, the Mallorys enjoy their grandchildren.

Bart Dunbar, *City Liaison*
Arriving in Newport with the Navy in 1967, Bart eventually purchased Bowen's Wharf and co-founded Sail Newport. Recently, he and his wife, landscape designer Lisa Lewis, re-restored the William Claggett house, their historic Bridge Street brick ender, where they live with three-year-old Maggie and two-year-old twins Nathaniel and Peter.

Sarah Gill, *Green Light Representative*
In addition to snapping lots of photos as the *Green Light* photographer, Connecticut native Sarah also serves as staff representative to the Point Association Executive Committee. Veteran sailors, Sarah and husband Tony—ably assisted by son Ollie—own and operate the Michael Moulton House, their Second Street B and B.

David Pedrick, *Harbor and Waterfront*
As a naval architect, David was drawn to Newport in the 1970s by the America's Cup. Having restored their Second Street historic home, David and his wife Laura are very active in the community. Sons Benjamin and Geoffrey recently received their Born on the Point certificates.

Bill Hall, *History and Archives*
Having discovered Newport during the 1974 Music Festival, Bill became a seasonal resident for the next 23 years. Following retirement from a 38 year teaching career in Boston's Dorchester, he became a full-time Pointer in 1997. In addition to preserving Point archives, Bill enjoys sports, travel, and walking with Trigger in Battery Park.

Patricia and Rich Carrubba, *Membership*
Patricia and Rich hail from Connecticut, where she was a nurse and he was a CEO in the pharmaceutical industry. Now Newport realtors, this former Point Association president and first lady have lived on the Point in their restored Washington Street home for 8 years. The Carrubbas invite everyone with new neighbors who might like to join, as well as those with membership questions, to contact them by phone.

Nancy Quattrucci, *Neighborhood Watch*
Former Beautification Committee co-chair, Nancy has restored two historic Point houses with her husband Paul, since coming to Newport from Sutton, Massachusetts, in 1993. These owners and operators of the Corner House Inn are looking forward to retiring soon to their new home, the Weaver Cottage, on Washington Street.
Beautification Report

On a cold clear Saturday morning in October 30 neighbors, including four young men from Katzman Place and employees of the Hyatt Hotel, filled 15 large bags with weeds and planted 200

bulbs in Storer and Battery parks. The reward will come when the bulbs sprout on a warm spring day. Many thanks to all who helped.

The Point Association has also purchased six new trees, which will be planted by city crews in the spring. Two will be added to the row by

the railroad tracks in Hunter Park, two will sit along the Causeway in Storer Park, and two will be placed in the median between Marsh Street and the Goat Island Connector Road.

Speaking of the “Goat Island Connector Road,” shouldn’t it have a real name? How would you feel if you were 30 years old and still being called a “connector”? Anyone have any ideas that we can suggest to the city?

Marcia and Coles Mallory Co-Chairs

Windows 2000 Inc.
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We Are Getting WHAT Kind of Tree??

My parents had a farm in Virginia for almost 30 years. When it was time to get the Christmas tree, we always cut one from Watery Mountain up behind the barn. On this particular morning we were all home for Christmas: from the eastern shore of Maryland, my brother Bill, his wife, three children, one dog, one cat, and six rabbits; from Newport, Pete and I, Tony, Jason, one dog, and one cat. I say this only because all of the above went out this snowy morning to get the tree. Not the rabbits.

For a conveyance, we took the old toboggan no longer used for sledding on the hill because of too many splinters. But on a farm you don’t throw anything away. Up the back road we trudged, short legs walking in adult footsteps, mittens falling off, dogs chasing new scents, and snowballs flying. Even the cats stayed with us for a short while. Then we arrived at the tree Mom had already marked with a red scarf.

“What??” said my husband and Bill’s wife. “AN OLD BROWN CEDAR??” To these “outlaws,” who had grown up in the lands of blue spruce and feathery pine, native cedars were NOT used as Christmas trees. So, after much discussion, the two natives were left to cut and drag the tree home. Meanwhile, the “outlaws” took the rest of the short legged and four legged entourage down to the well to check that the cover was tight and nothing untoward was wintering over.

Finally, back to the kitchen door we came, all wanting WARM: a fire, cider, and dry socks. After a much needed nap, the business of decorating the tree started in earnest, with Mom explaining to the children when and where each ornament was acquired or made by small hands. Putting the lights on took forever, the old fashioned kind, big bulbs, many colored. Last of all came the icicles. Do you remember those? They were lead, carefully saved from year to year by my Mother, who was the only one with the patience to put them on and remove them.

“Well,” said one ‘outlaw’ to the other, “decorated, you really can’t tell it’s an OLD BROWN CEDAR and it does smell good.”
Around Alone Race Celebrates Its 20th Birthday

The Around Alone, a single-handed race around the world, was conceived late one night at the Marina Pub on Goat Island by a group of sailors headed by David White. The concept was simple: leave Newport in the fall, sail single-handed to Cape Town, South Africa; then to Sydney, Australia; around Cape Horn to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and back to Newport in the spring. The race would be divided into two yacht classes, Class One, 50 to 60 feet, and Class Two, 40 to 50 feet.

At the very last minute the race got the support of the English group "British Oxygen" and the renamed "BOC" left Newport in the fall of 1982. Won by Frenchman Philippe Jeantot, this first race was an instant success, and it has taken place every four years since then. In 1994, the start and finish was moved to Charleston, South Carolina, but the format survived with few changes. After the 1994 edition the BOC group decided to end its sponsorship, and the race took back its original name as simple as its program: "Around Alone."

Last year the rights to the race were purchased by "Clipper Ventures," a marketing company specializing in sailing events and headed by the famous British sailor Sir Robin Knox Johnston. As the only participant to finish the Golden Race, the first single-handed race around the world, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for this feat in 1968. This year, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the event, Sir Robin brought the race back to Newport, where the fleet gathered before heading to New York for the official send off. The course this year includes Torbay, England; Cape Town, South Africa; Tauranga, New Zealand; Salvador, Brazil; and, finally, Newport in the spring of 2003.

In 1968 it took Robin Knox Johnston almost a year to go around the world, and in 1983 Philippe Jeantot cut that time to 165 days. In this year's edition, the first boat is expected to finish in 120 days or less, a tribute to how things have changed in just 20 years.

You can follow the Around Alone race on the official web site: www.aroundalone.com.
Neighborhood Watch Report

A number of inquisitive and interested Point residents attended a Neighborhood Watch informational seminar at St. John’s Guild Hall on September 12, 2002. Officer James Winters and Sgt. Mark Santiserri of the Newport Police Department presented a very informative question and answer program, which included such issues as home safety, personal safety, measures to reduce or prevent theft, and reporting suspicious activities to police.

A second meeting, held in November, was announced to members by post card and will be reported on in the March 2003 Green Light. For additional information, call Nancy Quattrucci at 846-2434.

Tip of the month: Call 847-9922 or 847-1212 to reach police in an emergency or to report criminal or suspicious activity.

Nancy Quattrucci, Chair

Born on the Point

At the annual meeting in October, 14 recipients of Born on the Point certificates were announced:

- Lawrence R. Beerkercher
- Patricia Ramsier Breland
- Georgianna Dawley Faerber
- Ruth Cahoon Freeman
- Veronica Ramsier Garmon
- Ethel Millham Hanos
- Audrey Ring Kelly
- Barbara Ring Lalli
- Paul D. Popple
- Benjamin Freedman Pedrick
- Geoffrey Freedman Pedrick
- Gerald Ramsier
- Aaron Slom
- Earle Slom

Isabel Griffith, Corresponding Secretary

Nostalgic Moment from our Scrapbook

The Third Street trolley, about 1904

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Documenting Your Historic House

It is a great pleasure for me to take over this column from Ron Potvin, a friend and colleague, who did a terrific job discussing a variety of topics in the Green Light. At the Newport Restoration Foundation (NRF) we have 84 historic houses, and the constant maintenance that we perform on them enables me to pass on a wealth of information about preservation techniques. A recent event on the Point brought a particular kind of restoration problem into sharp focus.

On the morning of August 27, I received the word that our NRF house at 6 Bridge Street was on fire. As I ran from our offices on Touro Street to the corner of Bridge, Thames, and Cross, I knew it was bad when I could smell wood smoke two blocks away. On the scene were two fire trucks, and smoke and flames were issuing from all the windows. Most fortunately the tenant was not home, so thankfully, the cost of the fire was only a material one. We are blessed with a terrific fire department, which quelled the fire quickly and with a lot less water than I would have thought possible. Nonetheless, it was a very serious blaze. Many of the tenant’s belongings were lost, and there was extensive fire and smoke damage and somewhat more limited water damage. From the house’s perspective, we lost the front hall, which contained a great deal of original 18th century paneling. We were well insured and the house can be repaired. We have the ability in-house to put things back almost exactly as they were and will try to do so by the middle of the coming spring.

Aside from our excellent staff of carpenters and painters, the principal reason we can recover from this is that the house was thoroughly documented. We have detailed construction drawings and excellent photographs. We also have a detailed record of what materials were used in construction. The beauty of historic homes is in the details, the moldings, the paneling, the eccentricities of shape, and the patina of decades of use. You can’t replace burned patina, but if you document the house, you can replace the rest.

Documenting the interior appearance of your house is not difficult, and it is the surest way to help your home recover from a fire. Even if you never have to go through that trauma, it is an important part of preserving any house. Thoroughly documenting your house goes far beyond the process described here, but this will take care of the basics.

The Tools
- Camera: 35 mm (point and shoot is fine) or digital (if you must). I would suggest using good old-fashioned film. If you use a digital camera, make sure that you print the photographs, not just store them on the disk.
- Profile gauge (a six- or seven-inch-long row of stiff wires that are clamped tightly but still movable into a holder. Available at better hardware stores or at woodworkers.com)
- Pencil and paper on a clipboard
- A tape measure: A 10 or 12 foot model is the easiest to maneuver, but a 25 footer may be helpful for larger spaces.
- A yardstick

The Steps
- Treat each room as a separate part of the project. This is how the insurance company looks at it, and it is a useful way of dividing the project into discrete parts.
- Photograph each wall of the room individually. Make sure that you photograph the entire surface, even if that means taking more than one photograph of the wall. It is the detail that is important here.
- Photograph architectural details within the room: molding, windows, doors, surrounding woodwork, and even wallpaper patterns. If you have built-in cabinetry that is original or early, photograph that in detail as well. Fireplaces will generally survive a fire, but the mantelpiece may not, so be careful to depict that as well. Laying the yardstick up against details like mantels helps give a sense of scale.
- Photograph individual pieces of hardware. Cer-
tain types of hardware will survive a fire and sometimes it is all that survives a fire, but some kinds don’t, particularly 19th century hardware with glass doorknobs or brass veneer. Replacing hardware is important to reproducing the character of the house and a good photograph proves its existence to the insurer and also helps you identify the best possible replacement.

- Floors often survive a fire, since fire burns up and often spares the lower things in the room. Nonetheless one or two photographs of the floor (include the yardstick) are a good idea.

- Use your profile gauge to “take off” or “take picks” of the moldings and transfer them to the two dimensional paper. Architectural history is crammed with thousands of different molding profiles and usually a house of any age will have several unique or nearly unique moldings that have to be recreated. Molding detail provides an important part of the character of any old house and should be preserved. When pressed into the molding, the ends of the wires will be forced around the profile of the molding and will take on its shape. You may then lay the profile gauge onto a piece of paper and trace around the shape, making a reproducible record from which new molding can be milled. It will be a little rough and some work with the pencil and eraser will be needed to smooth out the curves. Look at the molding while you correct the drawing to ensure accuracy.

- When you have developed your photographs and completed your molding picks, look around each room to see what is not properly described so far. Write down or sketch out any missing details. You don’t have to be an artist; you are just trying to describe the structure and details of the room as completely as possible, and this last step is intended to catch any oversights.

- Finally, place all the material you have created in three-hole plastic slipholders in a three-ring binder. Don’t just cram it all into an envelope.

- The last step—and in some ways the most important—is to archive what you have done. I suggest placing one set in a relatively fireproof place in your house and the other at another location with friends or family. If and when you sell your house, give the binders to the new owners. Thus, as the steward of your historic house, you can pass that stewardship on.

Creating this record of your house is a great exercise in caution but it is also an exercise in preservation. You may create this document to help you recover from a fire, but with a little bit of luck that terrible event will never happen. Just as importantly you have created a record of your house that will help people in years to come know what your house was like and how it appeared in the beginning of the 21st century. If you have questions about this or any other preservation process please feel free to call the Newport Restoration Foundation. We love to help people preserve their own house.

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A LIGHT STEADY SNOWFALL, AND A WARM REASSURING GLOW FROM THE SMALL FIREPLACE

COTTAGE & GARDEN

ANTIQJE & UNIQUE GIFTS
9 BRIDGE STREET, NEWPORT
401.846.8477

THE NINA LYNETTE HOME
87 Washington Street

The Nina Lynette Home, founded in 1905, is a private non-profit boarding home for elders.

Room, Board and Housekeeping are provided in this stately Victorian home in Newport’s historic “Point” neighborhood.

For information about rates and availability please call:

846-2674 or 846-9276
Here is a tasty dinner to cook in the oven, when the weather outside is chilly and you plan to stay indoors.

Buy one large lamb shank per person.
Place each shank in the center of a section of heavy-duty foil.
Add vegetables, such as tomatoes, onions, green peppers, mushrooms, or whatever pleases you.
Sprinkle each serving with about 1/4 package of dry onion soup mix.
Seal packets tightly and place on a baking sheet.
Bake for three hours at 300 degrees.

Caution: Don't underbake. The lamb should be ready to fall off the bone when done.
Serve with rice or noodles.
Enjoy!
The Point’s own Betsy Alison, five time winner of the prestigious Rolex Yachtswoman of the Year award, has won the recent Rolex Osprey Cup, a “round-robin match-racing event,” defeating 10 entries from five countries, according to the Newport Daily News (“Newport Sailor Wins Regatta,” November 7, 2002). Together with her teammates Lee Icya of Newport and Suzy Leech of Avon, Conn., Betsy hopes to represent the United States in the Yngling class at the 2004 Olympics in Athens. Meanwhile, her fans can catch her as co-host of her weekly TV program, “Boating Today.”


Please welcome the following new members who have joined us since our September report:

Steven and Merry Preston Barker
Paul Crowley
Kim Curtin
Rita and Dave Della Volpe
Bill Doyle
Frances Greene
Elena and Ray Herrmann
Jane Howlett
Betsy Leerssen
John Lingley
Patricia McLaughlin
Susan Parks
Jed Pearsall
Dr. Maxime Poirrier
Patricia Saunders
Bill Wynn
Joyce and Paul Zimmerman

Patricia and Rich Carrubba, Co-Chairs

The Point Association Membership Form

Please make check payable to The Point Association and mail with form to PO Box 491, Newport, RI 02840. A subscription to the Green Light is included with all memberships.

_____ Individual $10  _____ Family $15  _____ Subscriber $25  _____ Patron $40

Name

Phone: _____________________ Fax: _____________________ E-Mail _____________________

Mailing Address: ____________________________________________

Second Address (if applicable): __________________________________

Committees and Activities

Your participation is needed. Please check the categories of interest to you.

_____ Beautification  _____ Harbor Watch  _____ Green Light  _____ Plant Sale  _____ Membership

_____ Program/Event Planning  _____ History and Archives  _____ Children’s Adventure Club

_____ Neighborhood Crime Watch  _____ Underground Wires  _____ Publications/Communications/Web

Patricia and Rich Carrubba, Co-Chairs
Save the Date

Sunday, December 15
Christmas Cookie Exchange
Harbor House, 3 pm

Monday, January 20
Book Club Get Acquainted Meeting
See announcement, page 19, for details)

Sunday, March 23
Potluck Supper
Further information about this annual event will appear in the Spring Green Light and the mail boxes of all Point Association members.

For details about other holiday celebrations throughout Newport and here on the Point, watch for the “Christmas in Newport” calendar in the Newport Daily News.

Contact Suzanne Varisco at 841-5220 to list your group’s activities in Save the Date.